



# Church Authority and the Papacy

Catholic Truth League  
Friday Apologetics  
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The question of divine authority of the Catholic Church is at the root of all disputes over Catholic teachings. It is precisely because Christ gave His Church divine authority that we can be certain that the Church's doctrine and dogma are free from error. Through this authority, we know that the teachings of the Church are also the teachings of Christ. "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Mt 16:18-19

## Quick Scripture

Mt 16:18-19 – upon this rock, keys to kingdom  
Mt 18:17-18 – if he refuses to listen to church  
Lk 10:16 – whoever rejects you, rejects me  
Jn 14:16,26 – Holy Spirit w/ you always  
Jn 16:12-15 – Spirit of truth guide you to all truth  
1 Tim 3:15 – Church is pillar & foundation of truth  
Jn 10:16 – there shall be 1 fold & 1 shepherd

## Common Objections:

1. The church is not an institution but rather it is the invisible communion of all true Christians.
2. "You are Peter (*Petros*), and upon this rock (*petra*) I will build my church" – Mt 16:18. In Greek the word for rock is *petra*, which means massive stone. The word for Simon's new name is *Petros*, which means little stone or pebble. The original Greek text implies that Peter is not the rock upon which the church is built, but rather the rock is Jesus Himself.
3. There have been popes that were corrupt, sinful men. Obviously this signifies a corrupt church that is far removed from anything that Jesus Christ would have instituted.

## Catholic Response:

1. Paul refers to the church as the "body of Christ" (Eph 1:22-23, 1 Cor 12:12, Rom 12:5) not as the invisible spirit or soul of Christ. Even during the lives of the apostles the Church took on the form of an organization (Acts 6:1-7, 14:23, 1 Tim 3:1-13, 1 Cor 13:28, Eph 4:11-13). There was even a church council over which Peter (as the first pope) presided (Acts 15). The Church is the "pillar and foundation" of truth, not merely an invisible communion of believers (1 Tim 3:15).
2. Jesus spoke Aramaic therefore he would have used the only Aramaic word for rock, *kēpā'*: "you are *Kēpā'*, and upon this *kēpā'* I will build my church," which provides no distinction between Peter and the rock. The Greek word for rock, *petra*, is a feminine noun, which would have been inappropriate to use to name Peter (a man). *Petros* is the masculine counterpart to the feminine noun *petra*, and so it would be the most obvious choice for the Greek translation.
3. Peter himself, after being given the keys to the kingdom, denied Christ three times, and yet Christ's authority remained with him. The popes are one of the devil's favorite targets, and they are subject to temptation just as any man. Despite sin and corruption, the integrity of Church teaching (i.e. doctrine and